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# THE BAPTIST Record

JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION

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SOUTHERN BAPT HISTORICAL SOC 5962 P1  
901 COMMERCE ST STE 401  
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ED SINCE 1877

MAY 27, 2010

VOL. 134

No. 21



## 'Radically different' Haiti story told

TWIN FALLS, Idaho (BP) — Paul Thompson reads the media accounts describing the journey of 10 jailed Baptist volunteers in Haiti who are all now free, and scratches his head. He was there. He says what he reads is not what he experienced.

Thompson, pastor of Eastside Church in Twin Falls, Id., was one of those 10 Baptist volunteers who went to Haiti in late January with the goal of taking orphans out of the earthquake-ravaged country and into an orphanage being started in the Dominican Republic.

That trip took a disastrous turn on Jan. 30 when the 10 were shocked to learn they were being charged with child kidnapping, with allegations swirling that the group had plans to sell the kids into slavery or, worse, harvest and sell their organs. Such rumors were false, but it took more than 100 days to finally resolve the matter.

Eight of the ten were freed in February. A ninth was released in March and the final one, Laura Silsby, was convicted May 17 and released on time served.

The story Thompson tells is far different from what has been described repeatedly in most media accounts. "It's radically different," Thompson said. For instance:

- The 10 Americans did not, as has been alleged in some accounts, go through the streets of Port-au-Prince passing out flyers and going door-to-door looking for children, Thompson said.

- Instead, the 33 children they were trying to take across the border in a medium-sized bus came from two orphanages and orphanage workers told them that none of the children had parents.

- The group was told multiple times before they got to the border that their documentation and paperwork — the source of the controversy — was sufficient, Thompson said.

A Haitian child services official said as much, as did a Haitian policeman and an orphanage director who has extensive experience transferring orphans from Haiti to the Dominican Republic.

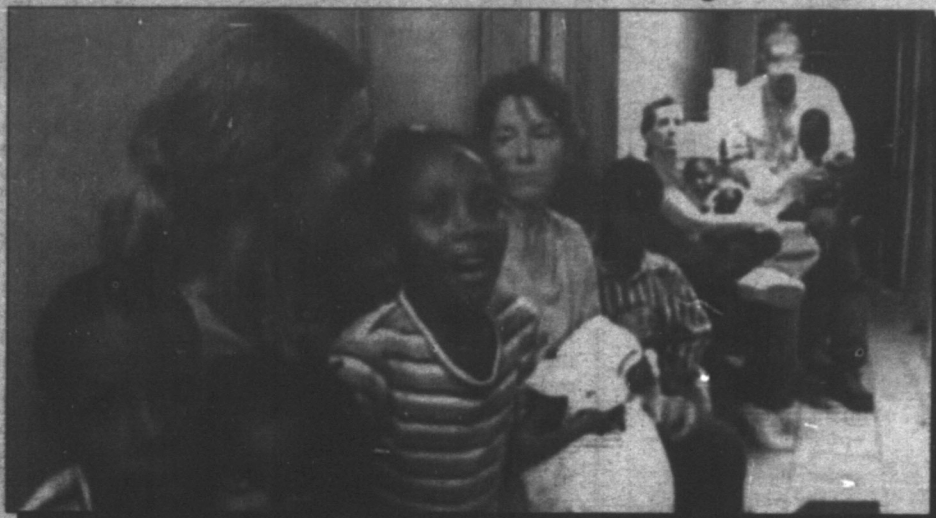
- The 10 Baptists were arrested in Port-au-Prince, and not at the border. They thought they would go free until UNICEF, a United Nations agency, got involved and pressed charges, Thompson said.

- They were arrested on Jan. 30, and not Jan. 29 as has been reported repeatedly.

Thompson said that ever since he was released from jail Feb. 17 after spending 19 days there, he's wanted the group's side of the story told but feared going public would endanger members of the group that were still in prison. Everyone is now free.

Their only goals, Thompson said, were to spread the Gospel and help children. The latter goal seemed to be on track until that disastrous afternoon of Jan. 30 when they were arrested and their lives were forever changed.

Until that afternoon, Thompson said, they saw no "red flags," nothing to make them think, "Wait a minute, something's not feeling good."



ARRESTED IN HAITI — In a video aired by CBS News in February, several members of the Baptist volunteer team are shown in the hours after their arrest with a number of Haitian children they were seeking to relocate to an orphanage that group leader Laura Silsby was planning to open in the Dominican Republic. (BP photo)

### A leveled city

The group's Haiti story actually began five days prior to their arrest, when they boarded a Greyhound-sized bus at six a.m. on Jan. 25 for the six-hour drive from Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic to Port-au-Prince. The closer they got to the earthquake zone, the more destruction they saw until finally, arriving in Haiti's capital, it quickly became clear they were "in a leveled city."

Only a few buildings were left standing, and many of the city's orphanages had moved their children to tent cities.

Before entering Haiti the group had made contact with a handful of orphanages, being told by the orphanage directors that they were overcrowded and had quake orphans who could be moved to the Dominican Republic.

The first orphanage the group went to that day, despite being crowded and having children who were needing food, "completely changed" its story when Thompson and the others showed up. The orphanage was receiving food and water from outside agencies based on head count and didn't want to lose any residents, Thompson said.

The Baptists did receive cooperation late that day at another tent city orphanage, which gave the group approximately six children to take to the Dominican Republic orphanage. The children were placed on the bus but taken off when a Haitian policeman named Leonard, who Thompson said became a "very helpful ally," told the group the orphanage was not a "recognized" orphanage.

Leonard also told the group that they needed written permission from an orphanage director in order to cross the border with the children and take them to the Dominican Republic orphanage, New Life Children's Refuge, "and so we took these kids off our bus, gave them back into the care of the tent-city orphanage," Thompson said. "...We

cooperated with every government agency and personnel that we talked to."

The policeman was "the first to tell us that all that is necessary for us is to have written documentation from an orphanage director transferring the custody of the children from his orphanage to New Life Children's Refuge," Thompson said.

Because the first orphanage didn't cooperate and the second one didn't have the proper paperwork, the group decided to go back to the Dominican Republic, where it would regroup, get a smaller bus — thus making it easier to navigate the streets — and make phone contact with other orphanages in Port-au-Prince to see if they had children who needed to be housed elsewhere safe.

They also asked their three translators, whom they were leaving behind and who had grown up in orphanages, to contact any orphanages they were close to and inquire about children. After a night's sleep in Port-au-Prince, the Baptists drove to Santo Domingo on Jan. 26.

### Second confirmation

The group headed back toward Haiti on Jan. 27, and at the border was surprised when, without the group's permission, border guards began loading strangers onto the bus for the trip into Port-au-Prince. Fearing for their safety, the Baptists told the guards to take the new passengers off the bus.

Amid the chaos and confusion they did allow one man and his assistant to stay. His name was Jean Sainvil, a pastor who provisionally directs orphanages in Haiti and the Dominican Republic. He had never met members of the group, but their shared interests quickly sparked a conversation on the bus about orphanages and needy children.

"He explained who he was and that he was trying to get back to his family in Port-au-Prince to assess more of the damage on

Continued on page five



# FEMA apologizes for religious T-shirt flap

JACKSON, Miss. (BP) — The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has apologized to a Southern Baptist congregation and the Salvation Army after a FEMA photographer asked a couple of volunteers to change their T-shirts for an interview.

Angelia Lott and Pamela Wedgeworth, members of a small rural church in Mississippi, were helping clean up debris from a tornado that left a 149-mile path of destruction through the state in April.

The women were working in partnership with Crossgates Church in Brandon, a Southern Baptist congregation, and were wearing T-shirts with the Salvation Army logo on them. When a FEMA photographer

approached them to request an interview, he made clear the logos were unacceptable.

"He said, 'We would like to ask you to change your shirt because we don't want anything faith-based,'" Lott recounted.

Wedgeworth said the photographer hurt her feelings, especially since she was motivated by her faith to help people in need, but she and Lott changed their shirts and proceeded with the interview because they wanted to recruit other volunteers to help in the cause.

The women first changed into Crossgates Church T-shirts and were told to change again, WAPT-TV in Jackson reported. Finally they were allowed to

wear Southern Belle shirts.

Craig Fugate, a FEMA administrator, released a statement apologizing for the photographer's actions, saying his actions "in no way reflect FEMA's policies or priorities."

"The photographer in question was absolutely wrong," Fugate said, according to the Associated Press. "...We are proud of the work that is done by our volunteer and faith-based partners and we are proud to work side by side with them in disaster recovery efforts across the country," Fugate said.

"FEMA is not the team, FEMA is only part of the team, and critical members of that team are the voluntary and

faith-based organizations we work with every day," he said.

Fugate apologized specifically to Crossgates Church and to the Salvation Army. He also called Congressman Gregg Harper, R-Miss., who is a member of Crossgates Church, to assure him that FEMA does not discriminate against religious groups.

"I shared with him that we just didn't want to have a situation where the government would take the position that volunteers from churches had to be something different from what they were, which was faith-based groups coming to help people in need," Harper said, according to Associated Press.

## Preacher arrested for describing homosexuality as sin

LONDON (BP) — A video has emerged showing a Baptist street preacher in the United Kingdom being arrested for calling homosexuality a sin.

Newspaper stories about 42-year-old Dale Mcalpine have received attention in the United Kingdom and the United States but the video, which Mcalpine recorded with a hidden camera, did not surface publicly until May 14.

The video lasts just under two minutes and makes it clear that he was arrested for expressing a biblical view of homosexuality.

According to the Telegraph newspaper, Mcalpine was arrested April 20 in the British town of Workington for causing "harassment, alarm or distress" after a police officer who happened to

be homosexual overheard him telling a woman that 1 Corinthians forbids homosexuality.

"England, the U.S., and other Western nations share the same legal, political, and religious traditions," Mike Judge, a spokesman for the Christian Institute in the U.K., told Baptist Press. "If this can happen in England, it can happen where you live. Christians need to be aware that small changes in the law can lead to big changes in the culture."

"If you want to be free to share the Gospel, you must defend that liberty in the public square. Don't hide in your churches; get out there and engage in the culture. Do it wisely, graciously, with excellence and with courage."

Mcalpine told the Mail, "You couldn't have made it up. It was crazy. I hope this result guarantees freedom of speech for everyone in the future... I have never been arrested in my life. It was an embarrassing experience. They treated me like a common criminal."

The video, which shows several police officers surrounding Mcalpine, can be viewed on YouTube. Following is the transcript of the exchange:

Mcalpine: "We're not out here to break any laws. We want to abide by the law. There isn't any law against saying that things are sins. There isn't any law against that."

Police: "Hello sir. What've you been saying, homophobic-wise?"

Mcalpine: "Well, homophobia is hatred towards homosexuals. That's the definition of homophobia but I'm not a homophobia [sic]. I spoke to your officer earlier and he was upset that I was saying homosexuality was a sin, which is what the Bible says, and I affirm that's what I say because that's in the Bible. And there's no law, there's no law..."

Police: "Well there is."

Mcalpine: "No there isn't."

Police: "There is. Unfortunately, mate, it's a breach of Section Five of the Public Order Act."

Mcalpine: "It actually isn't."

Police: "Sir, it's a..."

Mcalpine: "We wouldn't do that because if it was against the law, y'know. Lord Carey, was it Lord — the guy who passed that law in the Houses of Parliament recently — the free speech [inaudible]."

Police: "[inaudible] It protects free speech to a degree but [inaudible]."

Mcalpine's friend: "Actually, I certainly didn't. These two gentlemen listened to probably all I've said. I certainly never mentioned homosexuality."

Police: "Yeah, we know."

Mcalpine: "The only time I mentioned it was when I was talking to this gentleman here. When I was up on the steps preaching, I didn't mention it. Even so, y'know, it still is not against the law."

Police: "It is against the law. Listen, mate, we're pretty sure. You're under arrest for a racially aggravated Section Five Public Order offence. You don't have to say anything but it may harm your defense if you do not mention when questioned something which you later rely on in court. Anything you do say may be given in evidence."

Mcalpine: "Fair enough."

Police: OK. "Do you want to walk this way to our van?"

## Treaty criticized

WASHINGTON (BP) — The Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission in Nashville has urged its constituents to call on their United States senators to back a resolution designed to protect parental rights in the face of a "radical" international treaty. Richard Land, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC), encouraged action on behalf of a resolution requesting that President Obama not send the treaty — known as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child — to the Senate. The non-binding resolution sponsored by Sen. Jim DeMint, R-S.C., says the treaty "is incompatible" with the Constitution and laws of the United States, favors governmental authority over parental authority and undermines the sovereignty of the U.S. President Clinton signed the treaty in 1995, but no president has submitted it to senators for their approval. The United Nations adopted the treaty in 1989. Only the United States and Somalia have refused to ratify it. The treaty "would largely hand over parental authority on such things as religious upbringing, discipline and education to the government, which would be required to answer to the dictates of a liberal international committee," Land wrote in a May 20 action alert. "Just as disturbing, it would give children unprecedented rights against their parents — a reversal of roles." Senate ratification of the treaty would result in parental rights "quickly slipping away," Land said. DeMint's resolution, which is S. Res. 519, says Great Britain was found in violation of the treaty for permitting parents to take their children out of sex education classes in the public schools without the children's desires being assessed by the government. DeMint introduced his measure May 10. Land encouraged citizens to e-mail their senators or call their offices through the Capitol switchboard, (202) 224-3121. Senators' e-mail addresses can be found at Senate.gov.

## Looking back

### 10 years ago

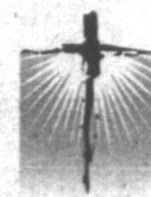
The recommendations of the Baptist Faith and Message Study Committee for a new edition of the historic document incorporate portions of the 1925 and 1963 editions, with some revision but no new articles, according to Adrian Rogers, chairman of the committee.

### 20 years ago

ACTS of Laurel is named affiliate of the year during the fifth annual American Christian Television System Awards ceremony in Fort Worth. In addition to being named affiliate of the year, the Laurel group also takes top honors for best events coverage series for "Football '89."

### 50 years ago

W. Douglas Hudgins, pastor of First Church, Jackson, brings the main message during the stewardship promotion period at the Southern Baptist Convention in Miami, entitled "The Cooperative Program — Sharing Christ with the Whole World."



MISSISSIPPI  
BAPTISTS

THE SECOND  
FRONT PAGE

PUBLISHED SINCE 1877

MAY 27, 2010

VOL. 134

No. 21



YOU CAN RESPOND  
RIGHT NOW!

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.





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BAPTIST RECORD, P.O. Box 530,  
Jackson, MS 39205-0530.

Send news, communication, and  
address changes to: The Editor,  
BAPTIST RECORD, P.O. Box 530,  
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VOLUME 134 • NUMBER 21  
(ISSN-0005-5778)

Published weekly except weeks of July 4 and Christmas by the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, 515 Mississippi Street, Jackson, MS 39201. Subscription \$10.35 per year payable in advance. Economy plans available for cooperating Mississippi churches. Periodicals postage paid at Jackson, MS. Member, Association of State Baptist Papers. Deadlines: News items — one calendar week prior to requested publication date. Advertising — two calendar weeks prior to requested publication date. All submissions are subject to editing.

# Remembering the war dead

On Monday we will observe Memorial Day 2010, a nationwide tribute to America's war dead that had its beginnings in Mississippi when the people of Columbus paused to remember and decorate local military graves in the years after the end of the Civil War.

To paraphrase Thomas Jefferson, the Tree of Liberty has since been watered with the blood of many more brave men and women who have given their lives in defense of this country in some of the most horrific conflagrations in human history. They were someone's son, daughter, father, mother, or beloved friend, and the world has been poorer because of their loss. We are free today because of their sacrifices.

As our Armed Services struggle in our stead even today against the forces of tyranny and political enslavement that are so often grounded in religious fanaticism and would take away our freedoms — not the least of which would be our freedom of worship — it is therefore fitting to follow the example of our forebears and pause to remember the people involved in securing those freedoms.

Problem is, Memorial Day for many Americans has become just another day to take off work and immerse ourselves in some self-absorbed activity while giving little thought to the day's significance. It shouldn't be that way, so perhaps a brief history of this important observance is in order.

According to The History Channel web site, Memorial Day was originally



known as Decoration Day because it was a time set aside to honor the nation's Civil War dead by decorating their graves. It was first widely observed on May 30, 1868, to commemorate the sacrifices of Civil War soldiers, by proclamation of General John A. Logan of the Grand Army of the Republic, an organization of former sailors and soldiers. On May 5, 1868, Logan declared in General Order No. 11 that:

*The 30th of May, 1868, is designated for the purpose of strewing with flowers, or otherwise decorating the graves of comrades who died in defense of their country during the late rebellion, and whose bodies now lie in almost every city, village, and hamlet churchyard in the land. In this observance no form of ceremony is prescribed, but posts and comrades will in their own way arrange such fitting services and testimonials of respect as circumstances may permit.*

During the first celebration of Decoration Day, General James Garfield made a speech at Arlington National Cemetery, after which 5,000 participants helped to decorate the graves of the more than 20,000 Union and Confederate soldiers buried in the cemetery.

This 1868 celebration was inspired by local observances of the day in several towns throughout America that had taken place in the three years since the Civil War.

In our spoiled, materialistic culture of today, we have forgotten too much of our history. We take too lightly the sacrifices of our soldiers, sailors, Marines, and airmen — and their families. Too many of us are too far removed from such sacrifices ourselves to really appreciate what they have done, and are doing, for us.

Super Bowl Sunday is a bigger event now. Whiny basketball stars are our heroes. A prime time is more important than attending a Memorial Day ceremony. Slathering barbecue sauce on the ribs weighing down our fancy grills is a higher priority than stopping for a few minutes to recall our war dead.

Christians, of all people, should be ashamed to act that way. If not for the sacrifices of these men and women throughout the history of our country, we would have no freedom to worship God in openness and without fear. We would be severely limited in our ability to evangelize the world (if we could do so at all). We would be defenseless and persecuted everywhere.

War is not God's best for us, and He surely grieves every loss caused by mankind's ultimate inhumanity. As long as there is evil in this world, though, there will undoubtedly be armed conflict and people will die to defend our freedoms.

May we never take them for granted.

For the past year, a group of godly men and women have been meeting to bring a report that will be formally presented at the June meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). The Great Commission Resurgence Task Force report for me has some similarities to my granddaughter's tee ball game, like "everyone bats."

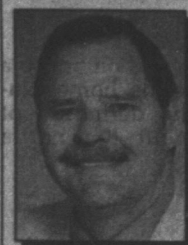
It would be foolish for anyone who knows Southern Baptists to believe that a report of this magnitude would not be batted around by people who make up the local congregations of our churches, and rightly so. In fact, I believe that every Southern Baptist has the freedom to not only bat the ideas presented around in their churches, local associations, and state conventions, but also every cooperating church has an opportunity to send messengers to the SBC where this report should be openly debated.

I want to say that every person who debates the issues should be free to speak openly and never be demonized for either agreeing or disagreeing with the report. In my opinion, the people involved in the debate will also be godly people.

Everyone bats in the SBC, and that's the way it should be.

One reason that I am very

## GUEST OPINION:



### Everyone bats in the SBC

By Joseph Bunce, exec. director  
Baptist Convention of N.M.

much interested in the outcome of the GCRTF report debate and vote is because it directly affects people that I love and highly value. Much like my granddaughter's tee ball game, jointly-funded North American Mission Board missionaries who are part of our New Mexico family have "skin in the game" [personal investment].

This report calls for a phasing out over a seven-year period of the mechanism that has been used for 50 years to jointly fund missionaries in each of our 42 state conventions. The discussion on Great Commission Giving and the Cooperative Program are more than close to home for Southern Baptists. We can, and should, debate the wisdom of this report without fear that anyone will be called out for sharing his or her convictions.

Remember, we are all on the same team.

Several people have asked me about the outcome of this year's convention. How do you keep score, or are we really in any position to attempt to score this? The lost people of this world are dying and going to hell all around us. I pray that the debate on how to do the Great Commission does not take our focus off the Great Commission.

I remember another day in the history of our convention. It was referred to as the Conservative Resurgence. Folks in the church that I pastored back then would ask me, "Preacher, what is happening in our convention and how will this affect us?" I would tell them that the family was having a big discussion about

where we were going, but they could rest assured that we were having church Sunday!

This new big discussion will impact us, as it already has, but remember who we are. We are not a denomination; we are a convention of churches that relate in many ways. Churches relate at the local associational level, the state convention level, and the SBC level, but don't ever forget the thread that holds us together is our desire to do mission work cooperatively.

Each church is autonomous, and no one but the Lord should ever attempt to tell the local church what to do. I also think that we will continue to discuss ideas for many years to come. That is the way Baptists do it, and I am happy that I am part of that family.

We should read the report for ourselves (at [www.pray4grc.com](http://www.pray4grc.com)) and feel free to bat it around — but remember we are all on the same team (family). The bottom line for me is this: Will what is being proposed be the best way to reach the lost and grow the family?

The local churches will decide this. Whatever happens at the SBC, remember we are having church Sunday.



# 'Radically different' Haiti story (continued from page one)

the orphanages (of which) he's director," Thompson said. "...This director, this pastor, confirmed what the policeman told us the day before: that all that's necessary to transfer orphans from orphanage to orphanage is custody transfer, written documentation from the orphanage director. So there's a second confirmation for us that that's the documentation that's required and necessary."

Sainvil told the group that at least one of his orphanages was destroyed and that it would be helpful if he could transfer some of its residents to New Life Children's Refuge in the Dominican Republic. The two sides agreed to meet the next day at Sainvil's. First, though, Sainvil was dropped off at a relative's and the group went to a Christian school compound where they stayed the night.

## Bureaucratic delay

The next morning Thompson and the others met up with their translators, one of whom had made contact with an orphanage he grew up in that was overcrowded. When the bus arrived at the orphanage located in a mountain village, about 13 children were ready and waiting to board.

Following protocol, Silsby got each child's name, birth date, and closest living relative. The children boarded the bus. Everything appeared to be in order but when the bus started pulling away one boy began to cry, screaming in Creole that his dad was outside the bus. The bus stopped.

"He was weeping and had tears rolling down his eyes," Thompson said of the boy. "...As soon as we discovered that that kid's dad was outside the bus, we put him back in the custody of his dad."

The fact that a child who had a living parent was at the orphanage underscored the country's desperate situation. "We had heard that this was a common practice, that an actual parent would take their children to an orphanage and insist that this child has no parents, knowing that that child could be better taken care of at an orphanage," Thompson said.

Silsby then phoned Sainvil, who told her he was not yet ready for them to come to his orphanage. With time on their hands, the group headed to the Dominican Republic embassy in Port-au-Prince to try and obtain a document the Baptists had learned the Dominican Republic requires to transfer orphans into that country.

No one at the consulate had the document. Silsby's wait inside the consulate lasted so long — at least an hour — that the Baptists on the bus decided to feed the children.

"There were several delays," Thompson said. "She came out one time and said that the person that is supposed to meet her with the document was on their way."

The person never showed up. "From this side of things, that kind of dialogue is probably better interpreted as delay tactics, because they didn't have the paperwork," Thompson said. "Nobody had it, and it was not there. These are government agencies telling us the person with the paperwork is on their way."

"We waited and waited and waited. Eventually we told them that we have this appointment to meet at the orphanage with Pastor Jean Sainvil. We left the embassy building."

## Night on the street

Sainvil's orphanage and most of the neighborhood around it was destroyed. Despite that, the 20 or so kids from Sainvil's orphanage were dressed and ready, and they boarded the bus one at a time as Sainvil gave Silsby each child's name, birth date, and closest living relative.

It would later be learned that none of the children — not the 20 at Sainvil orphanage and not the 13 at the mountain village — were orphans. Thompson says now he does not know who was deceiving whom, but that he and the others believed they were receiving children who were orphaned because of the earthquake.

"That's still an unknown for us," Thompson said, "but as far as we knew, these kids that this pastor was giving into our care

and our custody had no moms and no dads. We had communicated above board that this is the purpose of this ministry; it is to only minister to kids that have no moms and no dads, and it was communicated frequently.

"Somewhere along the way, a deception was communicated to us who these kids were."

With 33 children now in their care, the group headed back to the Dominican Republic embassy to see if the official who supposedly had the necessary document had arrived. The person had not, but Silsby was told the document would be waiting for them at the border.

The group members now faced a dilemma. They did not have the proper documents to cross the border but they also did not have a place for them and the children to sleep. Officials with the Christian school compound previously had told Silsby and the others that they would not be allowed to bring children into the facility, but the group felt it had no other choice but to try. The school turned the group away.

The 10 Baptists and the 33 children slept on the streets just outside the compound, with military personnel on the compound grounds making the situation feel at least somewhat safe. Despite that setback, the group was heartened when medical personnel came out of the compound to check on the children.

Thankfully, the area around the compound saw no violence or looting that night. "Nobody even wandered down the street upon us," Thompson said.

## Back and forth

Thompson and the others woke up on Jan. 29 after a rough night's sleep intending to obtain not only the Dominican Republic document but also a Haitian document about which they had learned. They spent nearly the entire day looking for both documents, "going to every govern-

ment agency we were told to go to," Thompson said, while at the same time entertaining and feeding the 33 children.

The friendly Haitian policeman they had met during their first day in Haiti assisted them throughout the day, guiding them to the necessary buildings. The group attempted to obtain the Haitian document, going to a Port-au-Prince child services office and also a Haitian child services office, but got a similar story each time.



Silsby

"They would say, 'This is a brand new document. We actually don't have the document,' or, 'We don't have anyone here to sign the document. You'll have to go to [another] office to get it.'"

The final Haitian government office they visited wasn't any more helpful and, in hindsight, may have helped

lead to their arrest. After Silsby showed an official there the documents she had been given by the two orphanages, the official responded, "This document that you have, you might as well take it to the border and see if they'll let you cross with this document because this other document — that everyone knows is a new document to have — nobody has it, and nobody is here to actually produce the document," Thompson recalled.

Late that afternoon, the group decided to head to the border. "We made that decision based off what a government official told us to do," Thompson said. "We felt we made every attempt to be above board with this process."

The bus left Port-au-Prince and got to the border around 6 p.m. "As soon as we got there, Laura stepped out and she had all the documentations with her," Thompson said. "She was explaining to the border guards, 'Here's the situation, here's where we're going.' ...They felt comfortable that everything she was sharing was on the up and up. That's the feeling we got."

"There began to be some dialogue amongst themselves in Creole or French about this new document that Haiti was now requiring for transfer of orphans. They were in a bit of an argument, some of the guys saying, 'This is all they need,' and others saying, 'No, they've got to have another document.'"

The border guards called the chief border guard, and Silsby and Thompson went into his office. "She was telling these guys the same story," Thompson said. "The border guards were listening, the chief border guard's listening. You can tell that he's confused."

The chief border guard made several calls and then got off the phone and broke the bad news: "I cannot let you cross the border." The group, he said, must go back to Port-au-Prince to get the Haitian document that no one could provide.

"He did not arrest us," Thompson said, "so we complied and said, 'OK.'"

The group now had the same problem it had the night before: 33 kids with no place to sleep. Desperate, the Baptists made a proposal to the chief border guard. They would stay at the border that night and the next morning, the bus driver would take Silsby to Port-au-Prince to get the document while the others stayed at the border until she got back.

The chief border guard agreed to the plan, and the bus was moved into the gated area.

The Baptists and the border guards, many of whom had grown up orphans and who appreciated what the Baptists were doing, then began working together to ready the children for bed. Their sleeping area would be a porch area with blankets spread out.

"[The border guards] were very grateful and expressing a lot of gratitude to us for what we were doing to help their country," Thompson said. "We got a good sense of reception from them."

Soon, a group of medical personnel showed up who had gotten word about the children. These officials ran a medical facility in Haiti five miles from the border and offered to give the children physicals, including de-worming medication, the next day. The Baptists agreed.

The new plan for Saturday approved again by the chief border guard now had the bus dropping the children off at the medical facility while Silsby went to Port-au-Prince to obtain the document. The Baptists' frustrating predicament now seemed to have a silver lining, and, perhaps, things would fall into place the next day.

That hint of optimism soon turned to joy that night when the conversation between the

— Continued on page eight

## REVIVALS AND HOMECOMINGS

1. **Arlington Church, Bogue Chitto:** Homecoming, May 30; Wilson Winstead, speaker; Brandon Andrews, music; dinner on the grounds followed by afternoon service at 1:15 p.m.
2. **County Line Church, Dossville:** Revival, June 6-9; Sun., 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Ben Yarbrough, speaker; Robbye Robertson, music; Robert Magee, pastor.
3. **Center Hill Church, Hamilton:** Homecoming, memorial, decoration service, June 6; Sunday School, 9 a.m.; worship, 10 a.m., followed by covered dish meal; Billy Wayne Morris, speaker; Terry J. Edwards, pastor.
4. **Mt. Carmel Church, Carthage:** Revival, June 6-11; Glenn Kelly, speaker; McQua Jones, music; for more information, call (601) 267-5717.
5. **Bethel Church, Lawrence County Association:** Homecoming, June 13, 10 a.m., followed by lunch; James Messer, speaker; The Smiths, music.
6. **Liberty Church, Carroll County:** Homecoming, June 6; services, 10:30 a.m., followed by lunch; Joseph Sansing, speaker; Gary Tanner, pastor.
7. **Grace Church, Laurel:** 33rd homecoming, June 6; services, 11 a.m., followed by lunch and reading of the church history and photos; Chris Hodge, pastor.
8. **Shiloh Church, Big Creek, Calhoun County:** Homecoming, June 6; services, 10:30 a.m., followed by lunch; Johnny Hearn, pastor.



## BIBLIOCIPHER

By Charles Marx, 1932 - 2004  
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MBSX YXE, FZTQZ TJ  
KXMN NADJXBDQVA  
JANITQA.

NXLDBJ SFAVIA: XBA

Clue: C = B

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Romans Six: John Eight: Twelve

## GOOD MEDICINE

One of the major concerns of Americans continues to be healthcare. There are dozens of areas of healthcare that get our attention and cause us anxiety, such as insurance and all the issues related to it, the high cost of insurance for our medical needs, and the millions of people who are unable to afford medical coverage. Beyond just the safety net issues are the critical issues of finding help for a particular disease or problem that you may have.

While we stew and fume over healthcare issues, it is amazing how we overlook so many of the things for which we could take responsibility and do something about that would make a difference in our health. For most of us, if we addressed our weight issues we would immediately affect some of the health problems we have. Such things as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, and joint and muscle pain can all be affected by control of diet and weight along with treatment. Those are things for which we are responsible and not the doctor. It is easy to ignore our responsibility and rush to the doctor wanting the latest silver bullet that will allow us to have perfect health without doing anything ourselves.

Let me just give you a health tip that I think is worthy of consideration and causes very little pain to implement. It comes directly from the wise writer of the Proverbs. Thousands of years ago he said, "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine" (Prov. 17:22). Having a heart filled with joy, a cheerful spirit, a positive attitude, and a smile on your face will make your life better and may even make a bigger difference than choking down some pill. This is certainly no empty promise or ancient myth. It is a fact that everything about your life can be enhanced and improved by having a wholesome and happy spirit. While the scientific community could run tests on this, permit me to share with you simply from observation some things that a merry heart will do in a person's life.

It will refresh you. It is interesting that the Scripture says, "A merry heart doeth



## Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer  
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

good like a medicine." Does that mean it will do your heart good or what you bring to someone else will do their heart good like a medicine? Probably it means both for you see, the reality is that someone who has a happy heart is infectious and usually contagious in the finest sort of way. Regardless of whether you are receiving or giving this medicine, it is good. It is humorous to hear people try to express whatever it is that happens in us that is uplifting and refreshing about happy moments. Sometimes it comes out wrong but we understand.

Victor Borge tells about a lady who had come to one of his comedy performances and stayed around afterwards to speak to him. She was bubbling with joy and delight and said, "I haven't laughed so much since my husband died." While the comment came out sideways, we understand that what she was saying was this was a refreshing moment in her life. I preached one night in a church and used some illustrations that were on the light side. Afterwards a man came up to me as he was leaving and said, "Man, I like it when you tell those stories. It really breaks up the monotony." I understood what he was saying — and I was afraid he was right.

A second thing that a merry heart accomplishes is that it will realign you. If you took all the events and experiences in life and just stacked them side by side, what you would begin to see is that some of them are not good. In fact, some of them are very painful but stacked alongside of them are some good, healthy, wholesome, and happy events too. A merry heart tends to keep us in balance and in focus. All of life is not bad. In fact, when you begin to see someone who is consumed by only dismal, dark, and foreboding depressive experiences and thoughts

of those experiences, trouble is in the works.

A merry heart comes along to warm our soul and overflows our mind. It helps us to see life in its full perspective. It is extremely helpful if from time to time we are involved with those people and events that are "merry heart" kind of moments. They help mellow out the tough experiences. There are some people who if you get within a hundred yards of them they will have a draining affect on your spirit. On the other hand, there are people that if you get within two miles of them, you feel encouraged and lifted. Oftentimes being around either or both is not your decision to make so you go through life being sapped by some and strengthened by others. It is important, if it is possible, not to be engaged with those folks who are constantly draining your spirit. Choose to interact and be a part of the people who bless, help, and share a merry heart.

One final thing that a merry heart does is that it reminds you. I believe that a merry heart and joyful experiences remind us that we are created in the image of God and we are to live in His likeness. I do not know everything that is indicated or implied in being made in the image of God. Certainly, we are spiritual beings along with being rational and emotional beings. No other creation of God has the capacity to enjoy and to express joy as we do. Pigs may enjoy going to the

trough, but they do not smile or interact with the pig world in a way that lifts their spirits or brings joy to each other's hearts. A merry heart is a unique feature that God has prepared for His highest creation. As such, it is a vial of great medicine that can make a difference everyday. God has arranged for us to be a blessing to others and to be blessed by others. Through His creative genius, it is an ever-enlarging scene of happiness.

I have been to several graduations recently and watched as hundreds of students walked across the stage to receive their diplomas. With their hats and their robes on, you would think that everybody would look the same. All you can see is from the lower part of their forehead down and the upper part of their neck and up. Yet God is able to express Himself in that little window in thousands of different, unique, and special ways. How in the world can God take two ears, two eyes, one mouth, and one nose and put them together in such unusual configurations? I sat watching, feeling happy for the graduates and celebrating down in my soul what a great God we have who reminds us that we are a part of His creative expression. It is something to celebrate and to be merry about.

It is good medicine.

The author can be contacted at  
jffutal@mbcb.org.

## MS POSITIONS

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## VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

1. First Church, Glendale: June 6 - 11, 5:30 - 8:15 p.m.; preschool - 6th grade.
2. Faith Church, Ovett: Kickoff, May 29, 6 p.m.; May 30 - June 2, 6 - 8:30 p.m.
3. Hebron Church, Benton: June 9 - 11, 6 - 8:35 p.m.; June 12, 9:30 a.m. - noon; commencement, June 13, 11 a.m.; K - 6th grade.
4. Eastport Church, Iuka: June 5, 8:30 a.m.; magic and ventriloquism, 1 p.m.; lunch and snacks provided.
5. Mt. Olive Church, Okolona: June 16 - 19; Wed. - Fri., 6 - 9 p.m.; Sat. 10 a.m. - 6 p.m., including lunch and family picnic. Led by a team of college students. Ages 3 - 12th grade.

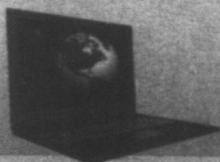
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## BIBLE DRILLS



1. Ogden Church, Bentonia



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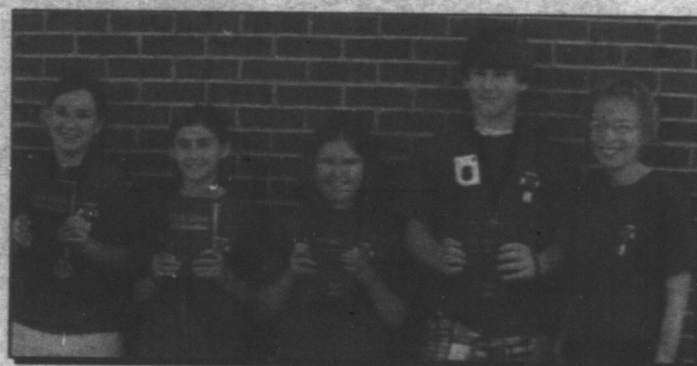
1. Ogden Church, Bentonia, recognizes its youth Bible drillers. Shown, front, are Anna Clark, Haley Alexander, April Ryan, Makayla Broughten, Stacey Ryan, Adam Alexander, leader James Pettis, and Wyatt Pettis; back, leader Lisa Clark, Hunter Scroggins, and leader Melinda Ryan.



2. Ogden Church, Bentonia

2. Ogden Church, Bentonia, recognizes its children's Bible drillers. From left: Carol Alexander (leader), Matthew Pettis, Donna Ryan, Colbie Hilderbrand, and Chase Clark.

3. First Church, Greenwood, recognizes its children's Bible drillers who advanced to the State Bible Drill. From left: Bethany Tillman, Abigail Lake, Mary Upchurch, Thomas Dillard, and leader Debra Miller.



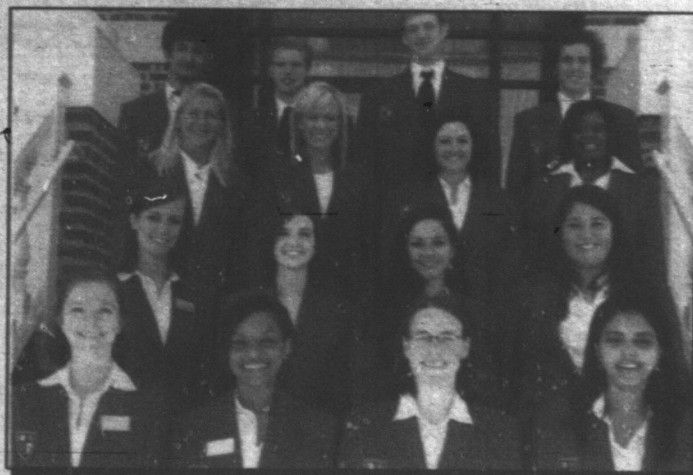
3. First Church, Greenwood



## COLLEGE NEWS

1. Kentucky artist Jana John's exhibit, Clay Explorations, is coming to Mississippi College's art gallery June 25 - Aug. 6. The Gore Galleries will host a reception in her honor June 27, 2 - 4 p.m. For more information, contact Gore Galleries director Randy Jolly at (601) 925-7770 or [rjolly@mc.edu](mailto:rjolly@mc.edu).
2. Gov. Haley Barbour's Bombers will tackle the Media Giants in a flag football game at Mississippi College to benefit Stewpot. Dubbed "Pigskin for Stewpot," the June 10 showdown will be held at Robinson-Hale Stadium on the Clinton campus. Fans are encouraged to bring canned foods to the stadium to help the non-profit ministry serve meals to Mississippi's homeless in downtown Jackson. Hundreds of MC campers from churches around the South are expected to be in the stands for the game that Thursday beginning at 5:30 p.m. Admission is free. The event is open to the public.
3. Twenty William Carey University students served on the Carey Connection group for 2009 - 2010. Carey Connection is an elite group of students who serve as student ambassadors for the university. These students represent the university at community, alumni, and campus events. Students are chosen through an application and interview process. Students must have and maintain at least a 2.5 cumulative GPA.

The Carey Connection members include (front left to right) Maggie Moore of Hattiesburg; Tanya Mandishona of Harare, Zimbabwe; Shelley Songy of Purvis; and Subhechhna Sharma of Parsa, Nepal; (second left to right) Emily Guthrie of Purvis; Haley Bryant of Bassfield; Nafiyah Younes of Picayune; Chelsey Maywalt of Carriere; (third left to right) Maya Sokolowski of Wiggins; Claire Walley of Richton; Courtney Daley of Carriere; Kelsey Windham of Decatur; (top left to right) Nikesh Singh of Kathmandu, Nepal; Joshua Thompson of Purvis; Kevin Lott of Seminary; Austin Hembree of Vancleave; and (not pictured) Justin Pipkins of Laurel; Colton Lott of Beaumont; Brittani Clark of Magnolia; and Caleb Crabtree of Lucedale.



3. William Carey University Carey Connection

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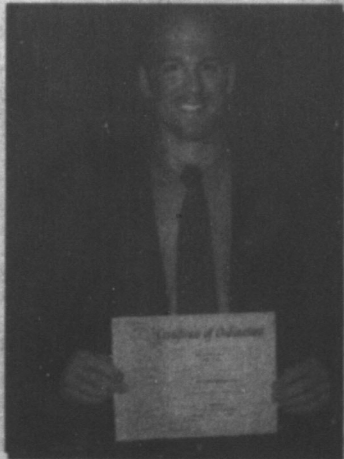
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## JUST FOR THE RECORD



### MISSISSIPPI BAPTISTS



1. Jones



2. Coker



3. Burns Church, Raleigh



4. Midway Church, Pontotoc County



5. Slayden Church, Slayden

1. Slayden Church, Slayden, ordained Ethan Jones to the gospel ministry Apr. 18. He is working on his Master of Divinity degree at Southwestern Seminary.

2. Toomsooba Church, Toomsuba, honored Kathryn Dell Coker for 50 years as instrumentalist May 9. She provided special music and was presented an engraved baby grand piano replica and roses.

3. Burns Church, Raleigh, focused on the men Apr. 11 by having a camouflage Sunday. Shown are the participants.

4. Midway Church, Pontotoc County, held a baby dedication recently. Shown are Adebyn, Justin, and Stephanie Price with pastor Tommy Tackett.

5. Slayden Church, Slayden, held a baby dedication service May 2. Families honored, from left, included the Russells, the Keys, the Russells, and the Rileys.

6. Bethany Church, Potts Camp, recently ordained Mark Newman and Brian Robinson as deacons. Shown are Melissa Robinson, Robinson, pastor Donald Worsham, Newman, and Stephanie Newman.

7. The children of First Church, Morton, enjoyed an afternoon of fun Mar. 27 listening to the Easter story, The Three Trees, and an Easter egg hunt. Shown are the participants.

8. Beacon Street Church, Philadelphia, recognized and honored Charlie Womble for 25 years of music ministry. He received a Bible, plaque, and gifts. Shown are Kathy Womble, Womble, and pastor Wayne Hill.

9. Whitesand Church, Prentiss, hosted Geraldine Ragan and Ricky recently. Shown are pastor Charles Burnham, Ragan, and Ricky.



6. Bethany Church, Potts Camp



7. First Church, Morton



8. Beacon Street Church, Philadelphia



9. Whitesand Church, Prentiss



# Money problems turn more states toward gambling

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Several states are turning to gambling for potential income amid budget shortfalls, even as the American Gaming Association reported that revenue from casino gambling fell 5.5% overall last year.

"It is deeply disappointing that some of our states are turning to gambling to help them close their budget gaps," said Barrett Duke, vice president for public policy and research at the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission in Nashville.

"If gambling was unacceptable when the state economies were doing well, it should be even less acceptable when their economies slow down. Government programs aren't the only thing hurting in these difficult times," Duke told Baptist Press.

"Families are hurting as well. These state governments should be cutting their own expenses rather than looking for easy fixes that prey on people, especially gambling addicts, to close their budget shortfalls," he said.

The Wall Street Journal, in a May 11 article with the headline, Strapped States Find New Virtues in 'Vice,' said nationwide the public-funding crisis has led state and local leaders to condone activities and businesses they'd be apt to restrict in better economic times.

California, for instance, is debating whether to allow and tax Internet poker, which is prohibited by federal law. A measure will be on the ballot in that state in November to decide whether to expand and tax marijuana sales, and at least half a

dozen other states are considering the revenue potential marijuana might provide.

Some states have loosened decades-old restrictions on Sunday alcohol sales, the newspaper said. One commentator said "blue laws" are a common casualty of recessions. "Every time there's an economic contraction, sure enough you start seeing local repeal efforts," the economics professor said.

A key focus of the Journal article was the state of Ohio, where Gov. Ted Strickland, a non-practicing Methodist minister, once described gambling as a "regressive tax" that harms the poor — but after Strickland reduced state spending by two billion dollars, cut more than 2,500 government jobs, and slashed state agencies by 10-20%, and the budget still wasn't balanced, his opinion of gambling changed.

When presented with an option to cut back a Medicaid program that provides oxygen tanks for critically ill patients, Strickland said that was the last straw and submitted a budget plan that included installing video lottery machines in the state's seven horse-racing tracks, The Journal said.

The lottery machines, the governor projects, should raise \$851 million over two years. Once Strickland gave in to the lottery machines, Ohio voters last November approved a measure to build casinos in the state's four largest cities. Voters in the state had rejected gambling repeatedly in the past, the newspaper said.

"Prior to the Great Depression, the U.S. had a near-total ban on gambling, and

since 1920 barred alcohol sales," The Journal said. "But the government legalized horse-race betting during the depression and in 1933 repealed Prohibition, partially due to the high cost of law enforcement and need for tax revenue."

"Atlantic City voted to allow gambling in 1976, when the city was economically depressed and nationwide economic growth was slowing. The early-1990s recession prompted states like Mississippi, Louisiana, and Indiana to bank on new gambling facilities for revenue. And after the 2001 terrorist attacks, New York expanded video gambling in bars to help make up for projected losses from lower tourism."

Duke warned against following the same pattern in the current economic slowdown. "By turning to gambling to raise additional money, the states are sending the wrong message to their citizens," he said.

"Instead of modeling good financial discipline and reducing their spending, the state that turns to gambling to plug funding shortfalls is communicating to its citizens that it is preferable to prey on the weak than to live within one's means."

"Furthermore, the states that turn to gambling to close their budget shortfalls are introducing a permanent burden on the citizens to fix a short-term problem," Duke said. "These casinos are not going to close as soon as the state economies improve. They will become permanent fixtures, preying on people for decades and increasing the number of families that are dependent on the states."

In May, the American Gaming Association said revenue from casino gambling fell by \$1.8 billion in 2009 from the \$32.5 billion of revenue in 2008, and revenue fell in eight of the 12 states that have casino gambling.

"People had less money to spend on our products," Frank Fahrenkopf, the association's CEO, said, according to USA Today. "Until people go back to work, businesses that depend on discretionary income are going to continue to struggle."

Government leaders who say casinos would bring more jobs to their states also must face the fact that casinos in 13 states employed about 328,000 workers last year compared with about 357,000 in 2008. The American Gaming Association also reported that casinos contributed \$5.6 billion in tax revenue to state and local governments last year, amounting to a 1.6% drop from 2008.

"States are increasingly tempted to rely on new gambling revenue, but over time the revenue gains do not keep pace with growth in spending," Robert Ward, deputy director of the Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government in New York, told USA Today. "So while gambling may help in the short run, it does not solve long-term budget gaps."

Pennsylvania is one of the few states that saw a revenue increase last year, but observers indicate it's because the industry is new there. In January, Gov. Ed Rendell expanded the state's gambling venture by legalizing such games as blackjack, craps and poker to help balance this year's budget, USA Today said.



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# 'Radically different' Haiti story (continued from page five)

Baptists and the border guards turned spiritual.

## Change of plans

With the children falling to sleep and the group members preparing MREs (meals, ready to eat), the border guards and Baptists practiced their lingual skills — the border guards' limited English and the Baptists their rough Creole. Out of the blue, one of the border guards, speaking through a translator, told the Baptists, "I want to become a Christian and I want to know how to become a Christian."

The Baptists, amazed at what had just been requested, led the man to the Lord. "Our act of compassion upon his country, God was using that to draw this man to Himself — I'm sure with a lot of other things," Thompson said. "Because of what just happened we became very satisfied that this was God's ordained moment for this man's life."

The Baptists rejoiced with the man, and the experience made the fact that they were still in Haiti and would be sleeping without a bed for a second straight night significantly more palatable. It would be their final night sleeping in freedom before being placed in jail.

They awoke the next morning ready to tie up all the loose ends and finally get the proper documents to travel into the Dominican Republic where a church group from Idaho awaited, but soon were told that there had been a change of plans. They would not be allowed to take the children to the medical center, and Silsby would not be allowed to travel to Port-au-Prince alone.

Instead, everyone was told to board the bus and travel to Haitian child services, which just happened to be housed

in the same building in Port-au-Prince as the police station. They were not given any detailed explanation. "Our understanding was we were going back to get the documentation," Thompson said, "so we complied."

## UNICEF arrives

The bus passed the medical compound en route to Port-au-Prince and arrived at the police station around eight or nine o'clock that morning. Ironically, it was one of the buildings at which the group had been the day before trying to obtain the Haitian document that officials had been unable to find.

The police escorted Silsby and her translator into an office, leaving behind the other nine Baptists and 33 children in a waiting area. The discussion between the police and Silsby lasted more than an hour, and she exited the meeting optimistic that everything was OK.

"Laura came out of this meeting pretty satisfied that the police were ready to put us back on the bus with the kids and head back to the border because she had produced the documentation from the orphanage directors," Thompson said. "She told them the whole story. We were actually in a building where we had been the day before trying to get documentation so she was able to say, 'We've already been here, we've tried this. Nobody was here to get this paperwork for us.'"

Yet they weren't allowed to leave the police station just yet because a representative from child services was on her way to the building to meet Silsby. After that they would be good to go, or at least they thought so.

Finally, the woman arrived. Silsby and the others knew something could be amiss. The woman was a UNICEF

worker who Silsby recognized from previous visits to child services offices. She walked into the building with a group of UNICEF employees, all of them wearing shirts with the UNICEF logo.

A "spiritual shift" took place, Thompson said. Still, there was no reason to worry. "You guys are going to be OK," policemen told the team, but the group soon began questioning that logic. The lengthy meeting between the UNICEF woman, Silsby, and the police had barely begun when the other UNICEF employees brought cameras and microphones into the waiting area to film video of the kids, talking to them in Creole.

The children began crying, and the footage made it into news broadcasts around the world. "This was a complete setup," Thompson said. "They were beginning to build their case for us as being kidnappers and child traffickers."

Even worse for the Baptists, the UNICEF employees told the children that the 10 were kidnappers who wanted to sell the kids into slavery or sell their organs, Thompson said. "What those cameras won't show — which is ironically amazing — is that these kids were sitting in our laps, crying on our shoulders and they were not running away from us," Thompson said. "We're the very people that the UNICEF people were saying we kidnapped them."

"There's no policemen that is taking these kids away from us at this point. Nobody's removed us from the kids. We were still in complete care of the kids. They're not even turning to the policemen."

"For us, that really began to tell us that we were right in the middle of something very spiritually active. For us, it was clear that there was a spiritual battle that we were right smack dab in the middle of."

After the UNICEF cameras left, the children calmed down and the Baptists were allowed to go back to their bus where they got food and water to feed the kids. With the meeting dragging on, the kids ate and everyone waited for a report from Silsby.

## Arrests announced

About an hour and 45 minutes after it started, the meeting finally ended. As if on cue, the UNICEF camera crew once again put microphones in the faces of the kids who, once again, began crying and screaming.

The UNICEF woman whose name Thompson still does not know then headed to a press conference in an adjacent part of the building where she announced that the Baptists had just been charged with kidnapping and child trafficking.

Thompson watched the press conference, as did some of the children. A policeman actually interpreted the press conference for Thompson. It was a surreal scene.

"He's just standing next to me, he was not acting on the charges that she's telling the press conference about," Thompson said, "and still, no large group of policemen has showed up. Nobody has showed up with handcuffs."

"We're still taking care of the kids, and she's telling the world we're kidnappers and traffickers..."

"They're definitely still crying and I'm sure heavy in thought about what was going on. It's hard to know really what these kids are processing in their minds."

The 10 Baptists were soon arrested, beginning an ordeal that forever changed their lives. That night would be Day one of nearly three weeks in jail for eight of them and 100-plus days in prison for Silsby.

## JUST FOR THE RECORD

1. **Concord Church, Booneville**, will host W. Elmo Mercer in concert May 30, 6 p.m., with a hamburger supper at 5. Reception following.
2. **Eastport Church, Iuka**, will conduct its annual river ministry beginning May 30 and continuing through Labor Day, Sept. 5.
3. **First Church, Eupora**, will host Crossway in concert May 30, 6 p.m. A love offering will be received.
4. **Coila Church, Coila**, is hosting its 9th Annual Memorial Day Sing May 31, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Crossway and Tyanne Newsom, featured guests. Food available; bring lawn chairs.
5. **First Church, Vicksburg**, surpassed its goal for the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering by giving \$23,441.14.



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## BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE From This Day Forward

Psalm 51:6-10; Song of Songs 2:15; Acts 18: 24-26;  
Romans 16:3-5a

By Marion D. Duncan

My beautiful Christian mother-in-law, Ruby Kelly Duncan, died when she was only fifty-four years old, but she left us a priceless legacy—she truly loved God, her husband, and her son. She and my father-in-law were “one.” They did everything together. Her example of love and faithfulness has remained in my heart since meeting her nearly fifty-three years ago. My own parents were married seventy years—another beautiful example of an enduring marriage. Our Christian parents modeled commitment to building a foundation for a satisfying, growing marital relationship.

In Psalm 51, the first foundation stone is found for maintaining a marriage “from this day forward.” David had sinned grievously against God, his friend Uriah, and his wife, Bathsheba. When Nathan helped him realize the seriousness of his sin, he fell

on his knees and cried out to God for forgiveness and a new clean heart.

Forgiveness and restoration are essential to a strong, enduring marriage. God gives us second chances when we confess the sin in our lives and restores us to a right relationship with Him. This is the pattern for forgiveness in marriage. When we offend or hurt our husbands or wives, we should apologize—seek forgiveness and a renewed right relationship with him or her.

Song of Songs 2:15 seems to be totally out of context in this passage; but, assuming that the maiden symbolizes the vineyard or tender grapes—the love of husband and wife—and the foxes are the young men pursuing her—problems that show up in a marriage relationship; then the passage may imply that the pair must resist those forces which would be destructive to their love. (The Broadman Bible



Duncan

Commentary, v. 5)

The second foundation stone is protection against little problems that cause the roots to decay. The maiden likened the potential problem areas in a marriage to “little foxes” which, when ignored, can destroy the intimacy and ruin the relationship. Some of these problems might be stress, work, out-of-control children, over-commitment in ministry, or neglect of the relationship. A husband and wife must make their marriage a priority and detect the “little foxes”—cunning though they are.

Guard against discourtesy. During courtship, courtesy was very important because it spoke of respect and admiration. These actions were significant of who you were and helped establish the integrity of a happy home. “If most of us were as discourteous with our friends and co-workers as we are with members of our families, we would be friendless and jobless.” (One Home Under God, by Jack Taylor)

Beware of unthoughtfulness.

Whatever happened to “Thank you . . .”? A quick telephone call can convey your thoughts and will ward off a “little fox.” Consideration of feelings, desires, and needs of the marriage partner promotes a stable and healthy relationship.

Avoid preoccupation. Every member of the family has a different and involved schedule resulting in our attention being directing away from family’s being together, sharing experiences, and building solidarity. Not much can be done to solve the busyness, but we do not have to let it destroy our family bonds.

Another “little fox” is poor appearance. It was very important to look attractive and be appropriately dressed before marriage. What was important about how you looked on your wedding day is still important in the home that resulted. It seems that we need a new word—perhaps, misappearance—to describe the sloppy appearance that dominates the apparel scene today. There is a concern that the attitude toward appearance may be descriptive of self-image and worth.

Watch for the T.M.T.

Syndrome. Too Much Television is “controlling the thought patterns, wasting prayer time, deterring Bible study; and undermining the moral and spiritual values of our generation.” (Taylor) Be aware of the “little fox” it is.

Money madness has trapped many in financial expediency. Without knowing it, they have moved from getting money to live to living to get money, and cannot find time to enjoy that for which they are working.

Often, the mobility of our society causes lack of community interest, prevents deep spiritual involvement and works against fostering meaningful relationships. Picking up and moving away may cause disillusionment and disappointment.

The third foundation stone is that of connecting spiritually like the example of Aquila and Priscilla. Christian married couples need to give attention to spiritual growth, Christian service, and church involvement. Spiritually mature husbands and wives can mentor other believers and couples and open their homes for Christian fellowship.

Duncan is a member of First Church, Macon.

## EXPLORE THE BIBLE Show others Godly grace

Leviticus 25:10-22, 35-38

By Shelby Hazzard

Share freedom – Lev. 25:10-12

“For six years sow your fields, and for six years prune your vineyards and gather their crops. But in the seventh year the land is to have a Sabbath of rest, a Sabbath to the LORD.” The Sabbath command prepared them for the following instructions known as “Jubilee,” a time set aside to exonerate the people, especially the poor and disadvantaged from debt and restore all land to their original owners. This may sound completely foreign to our capitalistic ears, but God was very clear, the land was His, Israel would simply occupy it and be its holy and gracious stewards.

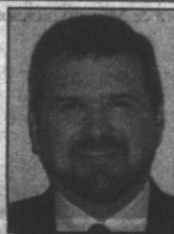
“Jubilee” occurred once every 49 years on the Day of Atonement. During this time all property would be returned to its

original owner and broad sweeping efforts were made to restore all Israel from life altering debt resulting in brokenness and slavery. Permanent slavery of foreigners was permissible in Israel as it was during New Testament times, however, in the Gospel of Christ and Jubilee, we see seeds of physical and spiritual freedom (Luke 4:18-19; Philemon).

“It is not by accident that verse 10 of this chapter is the motto on the Liberty Bell that hangs in front of Independence Hall in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.” (R. Laird Harris, Expositor’s Bible Commentary, pg 632)

Exhibit fairness – Lev. 25:13-17

Although God was the ultimate owner of the land, He did not forbid private possession nor buying and selling land, but He did demand fairness.



Hazzard

Land values were measured by the amount of time until the next Jubilee. If Jubilee was distant, the land was more expensive, if it was close, it was less expensive. In this system of Jubilee, God made it very difficult for the wealthy to take advantage of the poor and weak.

As Christians we are to adhere strictly to the principles of Scripture regarding the poor and downtrodden. I fear that some of us allow capitalistic ambition to distort fairness, becoming more concerned with bank accounts and personal wealth than building God’s kingdom and caring for the poor and afflicted.

Proverbs 11:1 says, *The Lord abhors dishonest scales, but accurate weights are his delight.*

Manage blessings

– Lev. 25:18-22

“The Sabbath year effectively meant that it would be two years before a proper harvest could be reaped again. The harvest of the sixth year would have to sustain

them not only then but during the seventh and eighth years as well.” (Derek Tidball, *The Bible Speaks Today*, pg 293).

In my mind, this obedience required by Israel can be applied to the modern church by asking, “Do we believe the Word of God to be sufficient?” If we obey the Word of God will He be faithful to yield fruit through our obedience? Yes! The only problem is that sometimes we misunderstand the results.

We measure blessing by increasing numbers, comfort and self achieved happiness, however, when we look at the lives of those we herald as heroes of the faith, we see a much different picture. We see lives of faithfulness and obedience, many times resulting in poverty, persecution and/or death.

As with Israel and the year of Jubilee, we must remember that God will provide and sustain us if we will simply trust Him in obedience, no matter how senseless it may seem to us at the time. *We must live by faith, not sight.*

Extended kindness

– Lev. 25:35-38

These commands are an extension of Lev 19:18, *love your neighbor as yourself*, instructing the Israelites to help those that are in need. We can see a New Testament parallel in the story of the Good Samaritan, where the person least likely to help actually sacrifices of his own time and money to care for a stranger who had fallen into the hands of robbers and been left for dead.

Not only are we to help those that are in need but we are not to “take interest of any kind from him.” We are not to take advantage of someone in hardship by enslaving them with unfair interest.

1 John 3:17 – *If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him. Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.*

This is my final article in this series. Many thanks to all of you that have shared your appreciation to me! To God be the glory!

Hazzard is minister of evangelism, First Church, Greenville.

## Guidelines for submitting news and photographs

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.



Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person’s address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts are not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if

submitted as a JPEG file via either (a) e-mail, (b) three-and-a-half inch floppy disk, or (c) CD. Photos must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items are generally not publishable. Photographs can not be returned. Please do not attach photos with tape or staples.

All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis.

Submit news and photographs to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.



# THE VILLAGE VIEW



Dr. Rory Lee, Executive Director

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## GIFTS OF HONOR AND MEMORY

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful, and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor with taste and respect, those who are and have been special to our special friends.

FEBRUARY 1 - 15, 2010

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## Vacation Bible School

The Baptist Children's Village has speakers available to come to your church during VBS to share with your children and/or church about this ministry to Mississippi children. Please contact Chrystelle Thames, BCV Director of Public Relations, [cthames@baptistchildrensvillage.com](mailto:cthames@baptistchildrensvillage.com) or 601-922-2242 to schedule your BCV speaker.



# Bible storying encouraged as effective discipleship

NEW ORLEANS (BP) — Keith Strasburger skillfully conveyed Jesus' story of the prodigal son to the small group gathered around him. His style was easygoing and relational, yet he told the story with amazing detail and accuracy.

Strasburger and Dan Cullum led one of eight small groups during the launch of a discipleship thrust called DNA 21 at New Orleans Seminary. More than 100 participants gathered in New Orleans and via the Internet in Atlanta and Orlando to learn about Bible storying and relational small groups as a discipleship method.

The small groups played a key role in modeling the concept during the three-day DNA21 conference.

Bible storying is the art of presenting biblical content from memory. Great attention is given to preserving the details while conveying the message of Scripture. Stories are presented in an orderly fashion toward building a biblical worldview.

After telling the story, Strasburger began asking questions, leading the group to retell the biblical story. Each person contributed. When important details were missed, Strasburger or Cullum gently pointed out the missing element and moved on to the next part of the story.

To close out the hour-long small group session, Strasburger asked group members to examine their lives in light of the story. Each participant then shared how he or she was like one of the characters in the story.

The group, strangers just hours earlier, shared openly about themselves and their struggles. Not everyone shared on the same level, but the session clearly illustrated how transparency can develop around intentional small groups.

DNA 21 developed out of Avery Willis' concern over the lack of discipleship in many churches. Willis is a former senior vice president of the

International Mission Board in Richmond, Va., who developed the MasterLife discipleship materials.

Willis planned the conference to promote Bible storying in relational small groups as a method of discipleship. He sees this not as a new initiative but rather a return to the way Jesus developed disciples in the first century.

"God wired us for stories. We like stories. We remember stories," Willis said. Video examples of Bible storying are available at [www.learning-tosoar.org](http://www.learning-tosoar.org) under the "Training" tab.

Bible storying has been around for more than 25 years and is commonly used on the mission field to reach oral cultures. As Willis looked at the discipleship needs of the American church, he began to see Bible storying as a viable option in the United States and other literate cultures.

Regardless of whether or not people can read, Bible storying proponents say it offers several unique advantages. Deep truths can be communicated in a short amount of time. Groups remain open to new people. Leaders are developed naturally in the group and the method is reproducible.

The stories are memorable, Willis noted. Truths "stick" when participants are encouraged to tell the story to others within their spheres of influence, he said.

"The processes by which you get God's Word in the heart make a difference. Jesus just kept asking questions," Willis said. "It is not just the telling the story as accurately as you can, it is the process of asking the right kind of questions."

True discipleship takes more than simply imparting information and developing knowledge, it involves transformation, Willis said. "We've got to get involved with people just like Jesus did. You get involved, you explain, you coach, you support and empower," he said.

The goal is to develop disciplined believers who are prepared and ready to disciple others, Willis said.

In 2006, pastor Jim Putman of Real Life Ministries, a church in Post Falls, Id., asked Willis to help develop and implement Bible storying. Willis agreed to the challenge and Real Life became a test case for the storying discipleship method.

Putman started planting Real Life Ministries in 1998, along with Aaron Couch. Dan Cullum joined the team during the church's early days. From the beginning, the church focused on discipleship and small groups.

"Jim came from an evangelism mindset, and I came from a discipleship mindset," Cullum said. "Discipleship flows out of a deep spiritual walk with God, and evangelism flows out of proper discipleship."

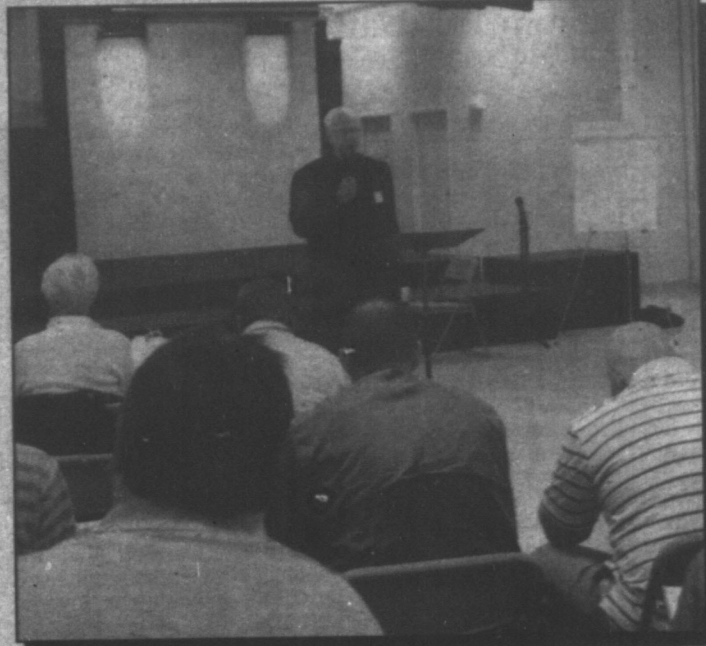
By combining their vision, they came to realize they were working toward the same goal.

The first year of Real Life Ministries was spent in what Cullum called "alignment," a process of working through doctrinal issues together. They had to determine where each of them stood theologically and what doctrines of the faith were essential, non-essential, negotiable and non-negotiable.

To assist them, together they carefully worked through Henry Blackaby's *Experiencing God* discipleship study. From their study of the Gospels and Acts, they concluded that the New Testament model was built on the way Jesus developed disciples in a relational environment. He had His inner circle, the 12, and the masses. Jesus developed close relationships with 12 men, but he was particularly close with His inner circle: Peter, James, and John.

The philosophy of Real Life Ministries is that in order to make disciples, Christians must be in "accountable relationship" with a small group — just like Jesus and His disciples.

The results of Real Life's intentional small group approach have been phenomenal. Starting with only four couples in 1998, the church now has 8,500 members, with



**TELLING THE STORY** — Avery Willis, retired senior vice president of the International Mission Board in Richmond, Va., leads a session on Bible storying in relational small groups during the DNA 21 launch at New Orleans Seminary. (BP photo)

7,000 involved in small groups. The church has planted five additional churches.

Real Life was already growing when Willis taught Bible storying to the leader's ship. Now, storying is a key part of the church's discipleship groups.

During his presentation at the DNA 21 conference, Putman noted that many churches fail to define a clear goal when it comes to disciple-making. He often encounters church leadership teams that do not share a common definition of what it means to be a disciple.

"That's the equivalent of me getting in a huddle on a football field, calling a play and everybody having their own idea of what that play means," Putman said.

Putman cautioned against "the next new thing" mentality of some pastors. Bible storying in relational small groups is not a program, he said. Forcing change on a church can destroy it, especially if the pas-

tor is prone to follow every new ministry trend.

Putman suggested a slow, prayerful implementation process. "Going to the right place in the wrong way is still wrong," Putman said. "We're just here to say 'this is what God has taught us about discipleship.'"

Putman said relational small groups offer leaders the chance to ask and answer questions, confront and hold people accountable, and to model discipleship principles. If all these aspects do not come together, a small group will be no more effective than other attempts at discipleship, Putman said.

"Our churches should be a place where everyone is a growing disciple," Putman said. "When that happens, a movement starts."

*Editor's note: The global launch of DNA 21 will be held in Colorado Springs on Aug. 26-28. For more information, visit [www.dna-21.org](http://www.dna-21.org).*

## Keys to Bible Storying

NEW ORLEANS (BP) — A typical Bible storying session follows eight steps set to the acronym, S.T.O.R.Y.I.N.G.

**S** — Set the story context. Bridge from the previous session's story by:

- \* Asking about how the group members used the story or had someone retell the story.

- \* Connecting a need the participants have with the main truth of the story by telling a personal experience, asking a question or showing a short video that raises the issue.

- \* Asking members of the group to listen for the answers to questions about the

story you are about to tell.

**T** — Tell the Bible story; don't embellish.

**O** — Observe participants to see if they're getting it.

**R** — Rebuild/review the facts of the story as a group, asking "What" questions (of the head).

**Y** — Getting out of the way and watching the Holy Spirit work among the group members as they dialogue.

**I** — Internalize God's truth by dialoging what the story means. Ask "Why" questions (of the heart).

**N** — Now applying the story individually and as a group (hands).

**G** — Go tell the story to someone else not in the group and report on it next week!

Video examples of Bible storying are available at [www.learningtosoar.org](http://www.learningtosoar.org) under the "Training" tab.

**TIPS:** To strengthen a Bible storying small group, seek to involve everyone present. Maybe someone other than the leader tells the story or a few in the group act it out in an impromptu skit. You may make up a song or sing one that fits the primary message of the story to plant it in their subcon-

scious minds. The most productive small groups that use Bible storying are those that are relational, supportive, transparent and accountable. Small group leaders quickly learn that the responsibility for learning shifts from the teacher to the student in Bible storying.

Finally, Bible stories are chosen in the first place based on the issues that a believer is addressing in real life. These are not random selections, but intentional uses of God's Word that make disciples.

See *Truth That Sticks: How to Communicate Velcro Truth in a Teflon World*, when the book is released in August 2010 by NavPress, for a detailed explanation of the Bible storying strategy.